

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES
October 14, 2010
Bangs Community Center: Room 101

Members Present: Daniel Clapp, Joan Golowich, Joel Gordon, Rosemary Kofler, Mary Jane Laus, Barbara Sutherland, Juana Trujillo, Jack Wollensak

Absent: Kathy Koplow

Select Board Liaison: Stephanie O'Keeffe

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Karen Erman (Administrative Assistant)

Guests: Christine Brestrup (Planning Dept), Robin Luberoff (Pioneer Valley Co-housing Attorney), Laura Fitch (Co-housing Architect), Beth Siftar (Pioneer Valley Co-housing), Elizabeth Kelly (Friends of the ASC), Barbara Slovin (Friends of the ASC), Doris Holden (Treasurer of ASC), Scott Merzbach (Gazette Reporter),

Welcome: Dan Clapp, Chair, called the Council on Aging meeting to order at 9:08 AM.

Minutes of Previous Meeting: The minutes of the September 9, 2010 meeting were approved and accepted.

Friends' Treasurer Report:

Doris provided a handout showing \$13,441.56 in the checking account and \$75,952.42 in the investment account, plus a CD worth \$5,030.82. Doris will move \$10,000 from the checking account into another CD. The Treasurer's report was accepted.

NEW BUSINESS

Senior Co-housing Presentation:

Laura Fitch studied co-housing in Denmark in 1980 and has lived in multigenerational co-housing in Amherst for 16 years. Co-housing is a housing development that encourages interaction between neighbors who share some common facilities and may dine together. Residents meet initially to design, help develop, and talk about what they want. On-going decisions are made by consensus. Residents generally own their homes.

Laura is interested in establishing Senior Co-housing for people 55 and older in Amherst. She provided a handout and circulated a book on Senior Co-housing. A Study Group would start the process and get together to talk about the issues involved, such as living closely together and co-care. The main reasons seniors choose co-housing are for health & more active life style, security and safety, community, to avoid burden on children, eating together, less impact on the planet, being with kindred spirits, general maintenance, appropriate size house, and financial good sense.

With zoning changes in Amherst, the time might be right for senior co-housing in N. Amherst, near the Pulpit Hill and Pine Street multigenerational co-housing communities. Money is available for Block Grants for doing feasibility studies. Laura solicited help in writing a grant proposal. There will be a bus tour of co-housing projects in the Boston area on October 30. In the U.S. there are about 100 multigenerational co-housing communities (24-30 houses) but only 4 senior co-housing communities (somewhat smaller, with 15-20 houses).

Dan said that since the COA supports seniors in any way possible, we would like to help promote the plan. We will put an article in the Senior Spirit about senior co-housing and work with Laura.

Laura would like to present a Power Point to the COA that would be open to all seniors, inviting them to join a study group. She offered a tour of the Amherst co-housing community.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Landscaping Work Update:

Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner, provided a handout of the plan proposed by Ron Bohonowicz, Director of Facilities, and the Department of Public Works for the plaza and West entrance to Bangs, which was built in the late 1970s. It proposes:

- to remove the eight 30 year old locust trees, all benches, and all of the pavers
- to replace the pavers with a paved, beige-tinted concrete plaza with a 5% slope from the front entrance to a bus ramp
- a new tree at the South end of the plaza and an enclosed planting area at the North end, both surrounded by a low wall with railings
- 3 new benches under the overhang to the front door, plus bike racks

The plan was presented to the Planning Board. Alan Snow, the Tree Warden, is very concerned about removing 8 trees in the center of Town. Alan does not have permitting authority but is looked to for advice. He suggested saving and pruning some of the trees. He would work with a landscape architect at UMass on a plan, while Ron would work with the DPW to come up with temporary paving solutions. The plan to move forward is uncertain. Ron will present any progress or new proposals to the Planning Board on Wednesday, October 20. If the Planning Board

does not approve the current plan, a temporary plan will be put in place until the spring. The temporary plan would involve:

- getting people in construction classes at UMass to volunteer to remove collapsed pavers, remove protruding roots, and reset the pavers
- the front entry area would be fenced off until that work could be done, because of the potential for ice accumulation, maintaining a limited path to the front door only

Friends Update:

Barbara Slovin, President of the Friends, reported. The Friends is having a Jazz Banquet fundraiser on October 21 at 6:30 PM at the Amherst College Alumni House. The Ageless Program at Amherst College and Pasta y Basta will provide the food. A professional jazz group from UMass will provide the music. There is a donation of \$10 to attend. All money raised will help pay for producing the Second Annual Amherst Follies to be held on May 1, 2011.

Update on recent Senior Spirit Questionnaire:

Nancy said that only 12 questionnaires have been returned thus far. The questionnaires were enclosed in the October Senior Spirit and Alan Root will distribute more by hand.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

Ad Hoc COA Survey:

Rosemary said that Randall Stokes would give a 5-minute presentation on the 2010 Survey to Town Meeting on November 8. All Town Meeting members will have received an introductory letter and the Key Points of the Survey in their packet prior to the meeting.

SHAG (Senior Health Advisory Group): no report

Highland Valley Elder Services:

Barbara reported on the September 13 meeting. John Lutz, now Director of HVES since the retirement of Robert Gallant, presented the new recommendations of the Caring Community Build Community Advisory Council for the next Title III grantees. The October meeting was to honor Robert Gallant's retirement.

Changes Sub-Committee:

Nancy referred to a handout – a copy of a letter from Audrey Child to John Musante regarding storage of furniture in the Pole Room.

Nancy, Julie Federman and John Musante will meet to talk about some office changes that would involve moving Pam, the Health Department Administrative Assistant, back to the Health Dept., using her current office as the Copy Room and using the current Copy Room as a Health Department clinic space.

STAFF REPORTS

Maura's Report:

A number of Amherst College students and UMass students have been placed into Friendly Visitor positions. Maura is working with two classes at Amherst College. One is Lisa Raskin's **Psychology of Aging** class of 20 students. Each student is paired with an elder. She has placed one student with Lisa White at the Clark House. One student is working with the VNA at Cooley Dickenson. Two students are observing in the New Options class. The remaining students are Friendly Visitors.

The other class is the **Collaborative Art** class taught by Wendy Ewald. It is a continuation of the "*Needs and Offers*" Time Bank. Two of our seniors are in that class along with the 16 students. Each student in that class is paired with an elder on an art related project. Maura has received positive feedback from both students and elders.

Maura has received a grant on Diversity. Her goal is to have Evie do outreach in the Latino community, looking into how we can make the Senior Center a more welcoming place to those in the Latino community and how we can meet the needs of the Latino elders.

Nancy's Report:

Nancy asked Rosemary and Jack to meet with her and Maura to brainstorm how they can help to lighten Maura's workload. The demand for services is extensive. The 'real' need is for another Social Worker, which the budget won't allow.

The Annual Volunteer Awards program is October 21 at 2:00 PM. Doris and Dan will be honored. Each will receive the Eveline Sears Award.

We got the Nutrition Grant for 2011 and will continue to receive \$1.19 for each meal delivered. Evie is doing a great job and has enough volunteers to deliver the lunchtime meals.

Nancy announced that the Mayor of Kanegasaki, Japan, and a contingent are coming to Amherst on November 7. Kanegasaki is Amherst's sister city. The Mayor will make a presentation at Town Meeting on November 8. There will be an opportunity to visit with him Monday morning, November 8 at Town Hall.

Stephanie O'Keeffe commented on the upcoming election on November 2. Question One is asking voters to repeal the Sales Tax on alcoholic beverages. Question Three is asking voters to roll back the Sales Tax to 3% (from 6.25%). If those measures pass they will take effect January 1, 2011 and would result in a 2.5 billion dollar revenue deficit for the State next year. That would be on top of the already projected 2 billion dollar deficit for next year because of no more stimulus funds. About one-half of the money spent by the State is discretionary, so that leaves about 50% for social services, municipal aid, UMass support, etc. If those ballot questions pass, it is projected that aid to Amherst would be cut by \$4 million on top of a \$4 million cut to the regional schools - a total of \$8 million. It would make the cuts of the past few years pale in comparison and have massive effects locally and statewide. Stephanie encouraged the COA members to inform their friends about the issue.

The COA meeting adjourned at 10:17 AM.

The next meeting of the COA will be held on November 4, 2010 at 9:00 AM at the Bangs Community Center.

Respectfully submitted,
Rosemary Kofler, Secretary

The approved minutes of the September 9, 2010 meeting were delivered to the Select Board Office to be filed.

**Council on Aging
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Document List

The following documents were made available to all members of the COA during the meeting. They are available for review at the Amherst Senior Center, 70 Boltwood Walk, Amherst, MA.

1. Meeting Agenda
2. Minutes of September 9, 2010 Meeting
3. Friends of the Amherst Senior Center Treasurer's Report
4. Amherst Area Senior Co-housing
5. Landscape Plan for West entrance and to Bangs
6. "Bangs Center Remodel" letter to John Musante
7. TITLE III Contract Evaluation Fiscal Year 2010
8. Amherst Senior Health Services Log of Activities